

I know my Senate colleagues join me in celebrating the continued vitality of the Armenian culture, and in honoring and remembering the victims of the Armenian genocide.

REGIME TARGETS INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN BELARUS

Mr. CAMPBELL. Madam President, recently I introduced S. 700, the Belarus Democracy Act, a bipartisan initiative aimed at supporting democratic forces in the Republic of Belarus. As co-chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I want to report to my colleagues on the pressures faced by independent media in that country. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has just released their annual report documenting the dangers journalists face around the world, including Belarus.

In May of 2002, CPJ named Belarus one of the 10 worst places in the world to be a journalist due to the worsening repression under Europe's most authoritarian regime. Throughout the year the situation of the country's independent media deteriorated as Belarusian leader Aleksander Lukashenka mounted a comprehensive assault on all independent and opposition press.

While criminal libel laws had been on the books since 1999, they were not used by the Government until 2002. The law stipulates that public insults or libel against the President may be punished by up to 4 years in prison, 2 years in a labor camp, or by large fine. Articles in the criminal code which prohibit slaughtering and insulting the President or government officials are also used to stifle press freedom. The criminal code provides for a maximum penalty of 5 years' imprisonment for such offenses.

Journalists critical of the fall 2001 presidential elections were targeted. Mikola Markevich and Pavel Mazheyka of Pahonya and Viktor Ivashkevich of Rabochy were sentenced to corrective labor for "libeling" the President in pre-election articles. On March 4, a district court in Belarus commuted Milola Markevich's sentence from time in a corrective labor facility to "corrective labor at home." On March 21, a district court released Pavel Mazheyka on parole. Under Belarus law, prisoners may be released on parole after serving half term their.

Other charges were leveled later in the year against a woman who distributed anti-Lukashenka flyers, an opposition politician for libeling the President in a published statement, and a Belarusskaya Delovaya Gazeta reporter for criticizing the Prosecutor General of Belarus. A former lawyer for the mother of disappeared cameraman Dmitry Zavatsky received a 1½ year prison sentence suspended for 2 years for libeling the Prosecutor General.

Last August the independent newspaper Nasha Svaboda was fined 100 mil-

lion Belarusian rubles for civil libel of the chairman of the State Control Committee. The paper closed when it could not pay the fine. There are other forms of pressure and harassment as well.

The CPJ report notes the financial discrimination faced by nonstate media, including pressure from government officials on potential advertisers not to buy space in publications that criticize Lukashenka and his regime. Government officials also regularly encourage companies to pull advertising and threaten them with audits should they fail to do so, according to CPJ.

When the Belarussian Government increased newspaper delivery rates, only nongovernmental papers had to pay. When the Minsk City Council of Deputies levied 5 percent tax on newspapers, government papers were again exempt. Such tactics caused such independents as the Belaruskaya Maladzyozhnaya, Rabochy, Den and Tydnjovik Mahilyouski to go under.

According to the State Department's recently released County Reports on Human Rights Practices "the regime continued to use its near-monopolies on newsprint production, newspaper printing and distribution, and national television and radio broadcasts to restrict dissemination of opposition viewpoints."

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support S. 700, the Belarus Democracy Act, in support of those brave individuals in Belarus, including representatives of independent media, who speak out in defense of human rights and democracy in a nation which enjoys neither.

THE SECURITY OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

Mr. AKAKA. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the threat of bioterrorist attacks on American agriculture.

Agroterrorism is a real and continuing concern. When Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge last month raised the threat advisory level to high, he launched Operation Liberty Shield to increase security and readiness in the United States. One part of Operation Liberty Shield involved taking additional steps to guarantee our food security. The government started to inspect imported food more carefully. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA, alerted the food and agricultural community to give greater care in monitoring feedlots, stockyards, processing plants, import and storage areas.

An ongoing outbreak of avian influenza in the Netherlands is an example of the type of crisis we might face, and the coordination that may be needed, if a terrorist launched an attack on our agriculture. More than 9 million of the estimated 100 million chickens in the Netherlands were slaughtered to prevent the disease spreading since the outbreak began in late February. Some

800 farms in the eastern Netherlands were affected. Dutch exports of fowl and poultry products were stopped. The cost so far to farmers and the government is an estimated \$108 million.

The Dutch Government took a number of strong steps to contain the disease. The Dutch Army was called up to help. Some 100 troops joined more than 400 police and customs officers to enforce a quarantine around the epicenter of the outbreak and to keep the disease from spreading to nearby Germany and Belgium. A ban on movements of live chickens and eggs within the country was imposed in early April. This led to some inconvenience to consumers since the supply of eggs in grocery stores was limited.

A coordinated attack by terrorists on some of our leading chicken producing states, for example, Georgia, Arkansas, Alabama and North Carolina, with an impact equivalent to the natural outbreak in the Netherlands would have serious consequences.

Egg and chicken production in the United States is a \$20 billion plus a year industry. Another \$10 billion is spent on processing and getting the chicken and eggs to market. We export more than a billion dollars of chicken products a year. Some 30,000 farm families are involved in raising chickens. Three hundred thousand people work in processing and transporting chickens for market.

On any given day there are some 1.5 billion chickens sitting in chicken coops in the United States. Over a hundred million birds might have to be slaughtered. If there was a ban on shipment of chickens and eggs, not only would chicken producers suffer, so would related industries. The trucking industry, food processing industry, food retailers, and those involved in exporting chicken products abroad would all feel the impact. Billions of dollars in losses could result. The impact on farm families and employment could be substantial.

Of course, my concern about agroterrorism is not limited to the poultry industry. Agriculture and related industries, such as food processing, manufacturing, and transportation, account for approximately 13 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product and nearly 17 percent of domestic employment. The deliberate and coordinated spread of livestock or crop diseases could have a devastating effect on our nation.

USDA is the lead authority in responding to agricultural emergencies. It has taken several steps to improve our ability to counter a terrorist attack upon our nation's agriculture. USDA has created a homeland defense council and increased border inspection and research activities. USDA's overall activities, and actions in support of Operation Liberty, are commendable. But we need to do more to prepare ourselves.

Responding to an agroterrorist attack will require coordinated efforts by

the USDA, and other federal agencies. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, DHS, the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, and the Departments of Health and Human Services, HHS, Defense, Transportation, and Justice will all have a role to play. In addition, these agencies must coordinate with states, localities and farmers and ranchers.

In February, I introduced the Agriculture Security Assistance Act, S. 427, and the Agriculture Security Preparedness Act, S. 430. The purpose of this legislation is to encourage additional and improved coordination and preparedness on the federal, state, regional, and local level.

The Agriculture Security Assistance Act, S. 427, will assist States and communities preparing for and responding to threats to the Nation's agriculture. My bill aims to improve our detection and response capabilities so they are rapid and swift enough to contain the spread of a disease. S. 427 directs USDA to work with each State to develop and implement response plans. The legislation establishes grant programs for communities and States to incorporate modeling and geographic information systems into planning and response activities. This funding also will help animal health professionals participate in community emergency planning activities and assist farmers and ranchers in strengthening the biosecurity measures on their own property.

The Agriculture Security Preparedness Act, S. 430, will enhance agricultural biosecurity by strengthening interagency and international coordination. The Act will establish senior level liaisons in DHS and HHS to coordinate with USDA on agricultural disease emergency management and response. This bill will task DHS and USDA to work with the Department of Transportation to address one of the largest risk factors in controlling the spread of a plant or animal disease: the movement of animals, plants, and people between and around farms.

Although our ability to respond to an agroterrorism attack is improving, there is still much more that could and should be done. The bills I have introduced will take the necessary steps to further enhance the actions already taken to improve agricultural security in the United States. I look forward to the Senate's support for these important bills.

THE MOBILIZED RESERVE SAVINGS ACCOUNT ACT AND THE DEPLOYED SERVICE MEMBERS FINANCIAL SECURITY AND EDUCATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Madam President, we are all very proud of the outstanding service of our military personnel during a series of significant military operations. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, both Active and Reserve, have responded admirably

to our Nation's call to service. These brave military personnel have demonstrated superb service by their participation in Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Since the 1991 Persian Gulf war, our personnel have served in a number of other contingency operations, including operations in Kosovo, Bosnia, Southwest Asia, and Haiti.

For the most part, our service men and women serve without complaint. However, we know that continuous deployments create hardships for them, their families, and for employers of members of the Guard and Reserve who have been ordered to active duty. There is no way to remove all of the hardships that go with extended and dangerous military service, but we can make sure that they are adequately compensated when they do endure these hardships.

The Personnel Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee recently held two hearings that included testimony about our Guard and Reserve Troops. We learned:

Although income loss data for current operations is not available, data for past military operations show that about a third of mobilized Guard and Reserve personnel have some income loss, a third have no change, and a third actually report an income increase. GAO reported that a DoD survey conducted in 2000 revealed that "the average total income change for all members (including losses and gains) was almost \$1700 in losses." Certain groups, such as self-employed reservists and medical professionals in private practice, reported greater income loss than the average estimated for all reservists.

Reserve component members who have been mobilized are eligible for the same pay and benefits, health care, and family support as their Active component counterparts, although some of them face challenges in understanding and accessing their benefits. All of the services have programs in place to help the members and their families to obtain their benefits.

Despite the isolated news reports about income loss, Reserve component leaders indicate that their service members are not complaining about income loss and that they are happy about being called up to do what they signed up to do.

It is very important that we not create an income disparity whereby a mobilized Reserve component member would be paid more than his or her Active component counterpart of the same grade and experience performing the same duties.

About a third of Reserve component members are involved in some sort of educational program. Some have reported difficulties in maintaining their educational status; loss of academic credits, scholarships and grants; and loss of tuition and other fees paid when they were ordered to active duty. Al-

though many colleges and universities are providing relief, not all are.

We also know that our Active component service members have been stretched with these frequent and lengthy deployments. Granted, they are in a little different circumstance because they volunteered for full-time military service, but these deployments are wearing on them and their families just as much as the mobilization affects Reserve component members and their families.

With this in mind, I recently introduced two bills, the Deployed Service Members Financial Security and Education Act of 2003 and the Mobilized Reserve Savings Account Act.

Deployed Service Members Financial Security and Education Act of 2003 is designed to compensate both Active and Reserve military personnel for frequent and lengthy deployments. It will authorize a new special pay of \$1,000 per month for:

Active and Reserve component military personnel who are deployed for 191 or more consecutive days;

Active and Reserve component military personnel who are deployed for 401 or more days out of a rolling 730 day period; and

Reserve component military personnel who are mobilized for a second time within a year of being released from and earlier call-up.

This bill will also amend the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act to protect the educational status and tuition payments of service members ordered to active duty and it will limit interest rates on their student loans while on active duty.

The Mobilized Reserve Savings Account Act will authorize a pretax savings plan for Guard and Reserve members that they can use to supplement their military income when they are ordered to active duty. This will serve as an incentive for those who know that their income on active duty will be less than their normal income.

These bills are relatively modest proposals that will assist our service men and women who are asked to spend the most time away from their homes and families. It is the least we can do.

I would like to end my remarks by also, once again, thanking all the members of our armed services and their families for the sacrifices made to defend this nation. Your efforts have not gone unappreciated by the folks back home.

I ask that the proposal be printed in the RECORD. The proposal follows.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

PROPOSAL

A new special pay of \$1000 per month for lengthy or numerous deployments for:

Active and Reserve Component members who are deployed for 191 or more consecutive days,

Active and Reserve Component members who are deployed for 401 or more days out of a rolling 730 period, or

Reserve Component members who are mobilized for a second time within a year of being released from active duty.